United Nations A/ES-10/525–S/2011/445

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
21 July 2011

Original: English

General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-sixth year

Identical letters dated 20 July 2011 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

In follow-up to my letter dated 19 July 2011, regarding the intensification of illegal Israeli practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, I am compelled to draw your attention to the critical situation of Palestinian prisoners being held by Israel, the occupying Power.

The plight of Palestinian prisoners continues to deteriorate due to escalating violations, most notably following the recent declaration by the Israeli Prime Minister of plans to further "toughen" their conditions, in grave violation of international humanitarian and human rights law. It must be recalled that more than 6,000 Palestinian civilians, including at least 245 children and 37 women, as well as 19 elected officials, continue to be imprisoned or arbitrarily detained by Israel. The majority of Palestinian families continue to be affected by the occupying Power's imprisonment of their family members, particularly men who represent the head of their households, and the attendant social, economic and psychological consequences are vast and continue to cause great suffering and hardship to these families.

The overwhelming majority of the Palestinian prisoners and detainees continue to suffer from deplorable and inhumane conditions and treatment in violation of their most basic human rights and the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law. It is a well known fact that Palestinians being held in Israeli prisons and detention centres are routinely subjected to psychological and physical maltreatment, harassment and intimidation, unsanitary and unhygienic conditions, inadequate health care, forced interrogations, denial of due process, restrictions of family visits, solitary confinement, and, in many cases, torture. Moreover, in direct contravention of the Fourth Geneva Convention, thousands of Palestinian prisoners and detainees have been transferred by Israel, the occupying Power, outside of the

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Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, to prison facilities inside Israel.

In this regard, I must draw your immediate attention in particular to the dire health conditions of three Palestinian prisoners, Yousef Skafi, Atef Wreidat and Maisara Abu Hamdiyye, who have been on a hunger strike for more than 30 days, since 12 June 2011, in the Israeli prison of Asqalan as a result of the occupying forces' rejection of their humanitarian requests to be moved to another prison so that they may receive proper health care for the conditions from which they are suffering, including diabetes, hypertension and heart and kidney problems. These prisoners have also been subjected to a ban on family visits and monetary fines. Today, Skafi and Wreidat were transferred to the Al-Ramleh prison hospital due to health deterioration that threatens their lives. They remain in critical condition, and a medical examination has revealed that Skafi's body is beginning to rot. In this connection, we believe it must be noted that Skafi's 11-year-old daughter, Abeer, died two months ago after suffering a severe nervous breakdown and coma following the obstruction of her visit to her father in prison. We urge the international community to give the necessary attention to this grave issue.

It must be underscored that Israel has not for one moment ceased its military arrest campaign throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, with arrests and detentions being carried out on a near daily basis. In addition to continuously adding to the ranks of imprisoned and detained Palestinian civilians, these arrests are often carried out in the context of violent military raids that cause death and injury to civilians, including children, damage to homes and properties, and cause widespread fear among the Palestinian population. Moreover, the Israeli occupying forces continue to use Palestinian civilians as human shields during these arrest raids.

In recent days, the Israeli occupying forces arrested 11 Palestinian youths in the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. In this connection, we are compelled to highlight the extremely troubling situation of Palestinian children who continue to be arrested and detained by Israel, the occupying Power. A recent report by the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem, entitled "No Minor Matter", reveals extensive Israeli violations of the rights of Palestinian children accused of stone throwing and their physical and psychological mistreatment during arrest.

In this regard, the report found that the children are often arrested by the Israeli occupying forces in the middle of the night, violently seized from their homes and taken alone to interrogations, without being able to consult an attorney or even their parents. Moreover, it was found that the occupying forces typically coerce the children to plead guilty to supposedly avoid a lengthy pre-trial detention, with the children subsequently actually sentenced to prison terms. Out of the hundreds upon hundreds of Palestinian children arrested (aged 17 or younger) for stone throwing between 2005 and 2010, only one was acquitted and the rest all sentenced to prison. We urgently call on the international community to compel Israel to release all Palestinian children detained and imprisoned and to accord all Palestinian prisoners their full rights under international law.

The grave situation of Palestinian civilians in Israeli jails and detention centres remains an issue of great concern and of priority for the Palestinian people and their leadership. Illegal Israeli actions in this regard and the poor health conditions of several prisoners in particular warrant serious attention by the international

community. The occupying Power must be held to the same standard of international law to which all countries are held and it must therefore be demanded that Israel comply with all of its legal obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law vis-à-vis the Palestinian prisoners it continues to imprison and detain.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 395 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 19 July 2011 (A/ES-10/524-S/2011/439) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Feda **Abdelhady-Nasser**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.